

**State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations**  
**INFORMATION RESOURCES MANAGEMENT BOARD**  
**Meeting Report**

**Date/Place**—May 15, 2003/Department of Administration Building, in Providence

**Members/Representatives Present**—Howard Boksenbaum, OLIS—RIDOA (Acting Chair); Ellen Alexander, DOC; Maggie Dziadkiewicz, OHE; Janet Levesque, RILOCAT; Dexter Merry, Public Telecommunications Authority; Thomas Mullaney, Budget Office—RIDOA; Joseph Pomposelli, DLT; James Willis, Secretary of State's Office; Don Wolfe, Member-at-Large; William Wray, Citizens Financial Group, Inc.

**Members/Representatives Absent**—Stephen Alves, RI Senate; Gary Ciminero, RI House Policy; Nicholas Leporacci, MHRH; Raymond McKay, City of Warwick; Peter McWalters, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; James R. Monti, Jr., West Warwick School District; Joan Ress Reeves, Library Board of RI; Christopher Wessells, URI

**Other Attendees**—Carol Ciotola, Recording Secretary, OLIS—RIDOA; Joan Gammon, RI.gov; Mark Treat, Governor's Fiscal Fitness Program's Information Technology Team; Todd Tolhurst, New England Interactive (NEI)

**Chair's Report**—Mr. Boksenbaum reported on the following: (1) He introduced a new member to the Board, Mr. William Wray, who is the Vice President/Chief Information Officer of Citizens Financial Group, Inc. He noted that Mr. Wray had been featured in the April 21, 2003, edition of *Information Week Magazine* (page 25) regarding Citizens Financial Group's plan to spend \$100 million on technology to improve customer service. He also cited the formal reappointment of the following Board members: A.T. Wall, Director of the Department of Corrections, and A. Kathryn Power, Director of the Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals. (2) He announced that the Governor's Fiscal Fitness Program is located in the Department of Administration Building. He recognized Mr. Mark Treat, a member of the Fiscal Fitness Program's Information Technology Team. Mr. Treat had also attended the Board's April meeting to talk about the Fiscal Fitness Program's activities. Mr. Boksenbaum also recognized Mr. Mullaney, who represents the Budget Officer on the Board, as a participant of the Governor's Fiscal Fitness Program. At this point, the Fiscal Fitness Program is scrutinizing the relationship between the State and New England Interactive (NEI), the company that manages the portal. There needs to be an organized information technology process, which OLIS has been discussing over the past several years. He felt optimistic about the outcome. As yet, it is uncertain what role this Board will play. In February 2003 Director of Administration Robert Higgins addressed this Board, stating that he would be looking to it for input on various planning endeavors. Planning has been placed on hold, Mr. Boksenbaum noted, until the Information Technology Team's direction with respect to the Board is made known. He also noted that applications for the Chief Information Officer's position are currently being screened. (3) At this time of year, the Board would usually begin its review of the Five-Year Plan. He suggested waiting until the next meeting before moving ahead with this process in order to gain insight as to how the Information Technology Team is proceeding, including its assessment of the Board's role. The Board could discuss at its June meeting how best to proceed.

**Approval of April 24, 2003, Meeting Report**—The April 24, 2003, Meeting Report, was approved, as presented, by unanimous consent.

**Portal Review Committee (PRC) Report**—Ms. Gammon explained that some PRC work is also on hold due to the Governor's Fiscal Fitness Program's review of NEI's portal contract with the State. She then introduced Mr. Todd Tolhurst, Director of Development for NEI. He is based at the portal office in Maine but periodically travels to Rhode Island to assist with the portal. Ms. Gammon distributed and reviewed the General Manager's Report, highlighting the following:

- 1) She plans to meet with RINET staff to discuss possible synergies. RINET provides Internet access to schools and is now expanding its services to municipal governments. She believes there is an opportunity for RI.gov to work with RINET to offer useful applications to municipalities.
- 2) A new e-911 site and tools were launched, as were new Fire Safety Code tools; and RI.gov's Creative Services Director developed a new logo for Rhode Island maps.
- 3) NEI nominated RI.gov for those awards listed in the report. She invited members to contact her with news of any local award opportunities.
  - Mr. Boksenbaum asked what was being submitted. She cited the e-payment engine, which won first place last year for the MIT/Accenture Digital Government Award. Though it will not be resubmitted for that award, she will nominate it for several others. Another entry will be the Emergency Page. RI.gov has partnered with OLIS to allow OLIS staff to switch over to the Emergency Page from the Home Page if the Governor declares a state of emergency. In this way, citizens could receive the necessary information using one URL. Mr. Boksenbaum pointed out that this feature was used during the June 11-12 Homeland Defense Exercise to test EMA's capabilities. During that exercise, EMA essentially had only one way to communicate with city/town officials. In response to mock explosions occurring at the airport, resulting in the routing and transporting of casualties to various hospitals, EMA held a teleconference with communities. Once the availability of the Web site was mentioned, RI.gov's Emergency Page became a favored mode in which to obtain information during the remainder of the exercise. Ms. Gammon felt that this tool was valuable, because OLIS is able to make changes to the site page without having to contact anyone at RI.gov. Another entry submitted was the "Ask a Librarian" tool, which is located on the Home Page. She asked Mr. Boksenbaum to present the State's initiative. He explained that the Providence Public Library (PPL) receives state funding to serve as a Statewide Reference Resource Center. "Ask a Librarian" questions to the portal are now being referred to PPL, who are contractually obligated to respond to questions within 24 hours. Since this initiative began in mid-March, of questions received to date, 80 percent of them are about state government. These questions will be tracked to identify information that might be useful to post to state agency web sites. There were many requests for the location of the Rhode Island General Laws. This resulted in providing a link from the portal's Home Page to the search page for these laws.
- 4) With respect to portal traffic and page views, she explained that traffic continues to grow. People are visiting the site as more and more state agencies switch over to the RI.gov Internet domain.
  - Mr. Wolfe questioned the rapid growth between last month's and this month's figures. Ms. Gammon noted that the State Police Academy Application service was implemented last month. This process usually generates about two thousand applicants during the April 1 through August 16 application period. To date, about one thousand applications have been received, despite the increased statutory fee—from \$25 to \$50, and the \$2.00 portal charge. Ms. Gammon also noted that in early March the Sales and Withholding Tax filing service was launched. This, too, would generate substantial portal activity. Mr. Wolfe suggested including personal income tax submissions. Ms. Gammon replied that Personal Income Tax filings are planned for next year.
- 5) She met with the Probate Committee, which Mr. Willis facilitated, to discuss designing a web site. She also discussed with Mr. Willis the development of a Master Business Form for citizens who would like to open businesses in the State using one fill-able form with one credit card payment for all fees and licenses. Another project in development deals with the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC). Ms. Sally Johnson, part of the Governor's Fiscal Fitness Program, contacted her to discuss posting a form and acceptance of credit card payments online.
- 6) The report includes a table presenting "completed" and "live" projects. She explained that some of the tools are italicized. These represent tools that were completed in the past but will continue to be listed in future reports as a reminder to users that they are available.

**Communications Working Group (CWG) Report**—Mr. Boksenbaum explained that the CWG was originally convened to work with the Department of Health and the Emergency Management Agency to determine how best to spend bioterrorism money. It then became a working group that serves the

Domestic Preparedness Subcommittee (DPS), which is part of the Governor's Emergency Management Advisory Council (EMAC). This Group has representation from a variety of agencies, including DEM, DOC, E-911, EMA, as well as other participants in homeland security networks, such as the State Police and municipal representation—Police Chiefs'/Fire Chiefs' Associations. This Group first reviewed the immediate needs of first responders; in this regard it managed to purchase 71 800 MHz digital radio base stations to be located at each of the dispatching units in the state that are staffed 24 hours a day/7 days a week. This system will reside on DOT's radio network to allow first responders as dispatchers to communicate with each other during emergencies. This Group is also working to finalize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for all parties involved, then it will prepare the MOU that will be executed between the state and each of the dispatchers. CWG anticipates installation of these radios by the end of September. He noted that The Station Club fire gave added impetus to this effort. Many of the members of this Group were involved in various emergency-response activities connected with the fire. The Group has also been working to hire a consultant to assist it in mapping out a statewide radio network. An award has been made to RCC Consultants; CWG is awaiting word from the Division of Purchases with respect to the signing of the contract. The consultant will first prepare a needs assessment, so that this Group can determine how best to spend the Homeland Defense funds once received.

- Mr. Wolfe asked if there was a digital data component involved. Mr. Boksenbaum stated that ultimately there would be. He explained that CWG had already issued the first of the purchase orders for analog radios when it learned that the Department of Justice (funding agency) changed its protocols to require the use of APCO 25 compliant radios (digital) instead. The purchase orders had to be reissued. At this point, however, the state's radio infrastructure is not equipped for digital capability. Once a digital infrastructure is in place, it would serve as a backup for data communications during emergencies. Mr. Boksenbaum advised that the next step would be to have a consultant review the data networks. One parameter for the radio communications needs assessment is to review communications statewide. He was unsure whether the RFP would allow for the scope of work needed to review data networks as well.
- Mr. Boksenbaum announced that because the DOH alert network needs to obtain connectivity in municipalities, a purchase order has also been executed to create a RINET-MUNI parallel, high-speed data network to provide the state with a closed network to connect all non-educational aspects of all municipalities. Four or five municipalities should be operational by the end of October. T-1 lines will be used to provide videoconferencing, which would travel on both the Centers for Disease Control's and Homeland Security Department's Web sites. The platform could also be expanded to accommodate other departments.
- Mr. Willis asked if any issues were raised with respect to this effort. Mr. Boksenbaum noted that the biggest issue concerns those communities without the technology available to link to this network. The other big concern will be how to fund the network in future years, since the federal funding received will initially purchase the equipment and provide funds to operate it for only the first year.
- Mr. Wolfe asked Mr. Boksenbaum for clarification about his concerns on the municipal side of the RINET connection. He explained that he has been given the impression that there are a number of smaller communities without staff to run the systems once connected. Mr. Wolfe noted that RINET solved the connectivity problem with its wiring; it may also be necessary to provide training. Mr. Boksenbaum said that he has spoken with Jeff Deckman of RITEC to discuss training opportunities for communities. Mr. Wolfe suggested using talented personnel in the private sector that may be willing to assist. He also offered his assistance. Mr. Boksenbaum viewed this as a two-phased effort. First to connect communities to the network and, second, to provide training to communities. In fact, for some communities, it might be necessary to buy PCs. He felt this subject was worth discussing further and asked anyone interested in assisting to e-mail him. After compiling those responses, he will form a committee. Mr. Wray noted that there are many opportunities to obtain surplus PCs. He offered to prepare a program and work out the figures. He also suggested

posting a list at New England Tech to request assistance for training. Mr. Wolfe noted that several other organizations would also be able to assist, such as Fidelity, universities, banks, and GTECH.

- At the Board's last meeting, Mr. Willis explained that the Secretary of State has created a centralized database of voters and with federal funds had planned to connect all municipalities to the Internet. Mr. Willis stated that although the Secretary of State would not want to waste funds by duplicating efforts, he would also need assurance that the RINET connection would be in operation for more than one year, together with the funding source identified to support it.
- Mr. Wolfe felt that if this Board could obtain federal funds to support the capital side, then communities could save their budgets for the on-going operations side. Mr. Boksenbaum explained that it would be necessary to join forces with the Secretary of State to develop a strategy.

On a related subject, Mr. Boksenbaum spoke about the Ocean State Higher Education Economic Development and Administrative Network (OSHEAN). This is a collaborative effort among higher education organizations in the state but also incorporates the hospitals' networks. (Care New England and Lifespan participate.) The state uses communications with higher education institutions to make use of Internet 2. OSHEAN is moving ahead with its Beacon Project, which includes a dark fiber ring in Providence, another ring in Boston and a direct connection to Boston. It will also allow the state to take advantage of better pricing and allow for some regional access to Internet 3. Mr. Boksenbaum offered to have a representative from OSHEAN attend the next IRMB meeting to talk about this project. A high-speed network will be essential for the state in the future; thus, it will be necessary to take full advantage of any opportunity to access it.

- Mr. Wray said that he would be interested in talking to private-sector firms than deal with disaster recovery to discuss funding some of OSHEAN's services for use by the state during emergencies.
- Mr. Wolfe, while not opposed to Mr. Wray's scenario, noted that it might cause a problem if this service were in competition with common carriers. Mr. Wray viewed this as a tertiary thing that might work well. Mr. Boksenbaum suggested having that discussion before OSHEAN attends a meeting. He will invite a representative from OSHEAN to attend a Board meeting to make a presentation and will also arrange for Mr. Wray to meet with a representative from OSHEAN to insure that the Fiscal Fitness Program knows where this Board is headed with respect to its relationship with OSHEAN.

**Remarks by William Wray**—At Mr. Boksenbaum's request, Mr. Wray addressed the Board. He said that he was optimistic and felt that the time is right to review the portal contract. There is a refreshing air of "let's do it the right way." Mr. Boksenbaum and his team have been assisting him, and Ms. Gammon and her colleagues have been very helpful with respect to making the best use of the portal on a larger scale. He noted that Mr. Treat is part of the Fiscal Fitness Program's Information Technology Team, as is Leon Saunders, a DCYF-IT employee. He felt that all of the conditions for success are here. Success depends on opportunities to do things on behalf of state employees and citizens; it is not just about technology anymore. The problem with technology issues is governance. State technology issues are not necessarily about the need for additional resources. In many cases, more resources could be used; but in other cases it is a matter of reallocating them. He felt that the state needs to sort out the fundamental problem and deal with it. He offered the Board his experience with respect to information technology, explaining that the issues that the state deals with are the same issues that are dealt with elsewhere. Leadership and attitude are important. He cautioned not to use a broad-brush attitude. The state has a lot of problems to solve with a finite amount of resources. Virtually everything the Fiscal Fitness Program will do will have technology at its core. He believes that the Fiscal Fitness Program will drive more value and power to the IT area than ever before. The bandwidth and standards are here, so IT will be at the core of solutions. He felt it important that those involved have positive attitudes. He stated that it is not the software that solves problems but the people using the software. First and foremost, governance and process for IT would need to be addressed; network, bandwidth and server concerns would be secondary. He again offered his assistance to the Board.

- Mr. Merry asked if report results have been released with respect to the Fiscal Fitness Program's review of the State's data center. Mr. Wray thought it to be in tough shape. Mr. Merry concurred, noting that this matter had previously been discussed at length by the Board.

Mr. Wray again offered his assistance, adding that he has staff at Citizens who would be willing to contribute their skills to assist the state and would make themselves available for the asking.

**Old Business**—None

**New Business**—Mr. Boksenbaum noted that it was time to prepare the Annual Report. He recognized Mr. Wolfe for his efforts last year in preparing this report. Mr. Wolfe stated that he would be happy to review a draft. Mr. Boksenbaum will prepare a draft for Board review at its next meeting.

**Next Meeting**—Thursday, June 19, at 3 p.m. at the Department of Administration, in Providence.